

MANCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION

Regular Meeting

March 24, 2014

Lincoln Center

PRESENT: Crockett, Hagenow, Leon, Pattacini, Pazda, Scappaticci, Stafford, Thames

ALSO PRESENT: Interim Superintendent of Schools Dr. Kisiel, Assistant to the Superintendent for Finance & Management Brooks, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services Matfess, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Radikas

ABSENT: Cruz

A. OPENING

A.1.& 2. Meeting Called to Order

The meeting was readjourned at 7:00 p.m. by Chairperson Pattacini. Mr. Pattacini explained that the meeting had been called to order earlier and moved into Executive Session. All in attendance participated in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, led by Mr. Pattacini.

A.3. Adoption of Minutes of Previous Meeting

ADOPTED – Minutes Regular Meeting of the Board of Education of February 24, 2014. Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

8/0 – Voted in favor.

B. CONSENT CALENDAR

Dr. Kisiel presented seven items on the Consent Calendar for Board approval.

B.1. Personnel Action

Details had already been provided to the Board members with their agenda.

B.2. Transfer of Funds

Details had already been provided to the Board members in their agenda folders.

- Transfer from MHS Classroom Instruction Contracted Services to MHS School Administrative Dues and Fees account in the amount of \$1,350
- Transfer from System-wide Music Contracted Services to System-wide Music Instructional Supplies and Materials account in the amount of \$9,000
- Transfer from Illing Middle School Admin Postage to Illing Middle School Admin General Supplies and Materials account in the amount of \$1,000
- Transfer from System-wide Language Arts Contracted Substitutes to Elementary Language Arts Instructional Supplies and Materials account in the amount of \$8,000
- Transfer from MHS Guidance Rentals in the amount of \$3,000 to MHS Guidance Field Trips in the amount of \$1,700 and MHS Guidance Office Supplies in the amount of \$1,300
- Transfer from MHS School Admin Postage to MHS School Admin Dues and Fees account in the amount of \$189

B.3. Presentation of Bid Waiver request regarding Integrated System Services, LLC, doing business as, Tone Klear Sonics

B.4. The Manchester Custodial & Maintenance Employees Union, Local #991, AFSCME, Council #4 – (July 1, 2013-June 30, 2018)

B.5. Extended Field Trip Request – Manchester High School – Baseball Team – Cooperstown, NY visit the MLB Hall of Fame and play regular season game vs. Glastonbury at Doubleday Field – 15 students – 4 chaperones – 4/14/14 to 4/15/14

The Chairman called for a motion.

Secretary Scappaticci moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the recommendation to adopt the Consent Calendar as outlined in Section B of tonight's agenda.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Stafford wondered how often we request bid waivers and why is this being requested. Mrs. Brooks stated it is a rare event, only the 2nd time in the last 10 years, and it is being done due to security issues. We will be saving money by working with the existing security company as well.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

C. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Rita McParland, 63 Nutmeg Drive, is opposed to closing Washington. She feels it is a central anchor for a national landmark. She is surprised it is even on the table for discussion to close. Ms. McParland also feels the Washington area is one of the largest expected areas of growth in town in the coming years. She noted that years ago Bennet was run down and some wanted to tear it down, and it was saved and is now a magnificent structure. She feels Washington can be the same. The brick structure itself will still be standing 100 years from now. She is concerned with renovating or building new schools that in 20 years more funding will be required. Ms. McParland is in favor of neighborhood schools and attended Nathan Hale as a girl. She is concerned that senior citizens are taxpayers on a fixed income and the rising cost of education is worrisome.

Mr. Robert Shanbaum, 99 Hartford Road, is Chairman of the Commission for the Cheney Brothers National Historic Landmark District, commonly referred to as the Cheney Commission. He read an article about the possible closure of Washington and it was suggested to blame the Historical Society. We should blame the Cheney Commission for that. The Commission prevented the demolition because it is against the law. They are not only interested in buildings, as has been stated, but they do have to protect the buildings. The community itself is an important indicator of the health of the historic landmark district and Washington, as a school, contributes to the community. He is not sure how people feel about neighborhood schools in general, are they willing to pay more for them, but Mr. Shanbaum feels the people should be surveyed about the issue. If they don't want neighborhood schools he asks that a different school be closed, as Washington is important to a national historic landmark.

Scott Aiken, 92 Laurel Street, has been advocating for Washington for three years. In the current plans, five out of seven plans close the school. Mr. Aiken wonders why only Title I schools have been targeted for closure. He is tired of spineless political leadership and tired of hearing why we can't do something or don't want to do something. Mr. Aiken feels that he can't count on the board to do the right thing instead of the easy thing. He would like an impact study done on how closing the school will impact the west side neighborhood. Mr. Aiken feels there is a pattern of discrimination in this town that cannot be denied. He pointed out polling locations were removed from both the east and west side neighborhoods and that Highland Park was moved to the top of the list ahead of other schools that had been on the priority list longer. Mr. Aiken feels Washington is the only truly blended school. He two children attended Washington and his son, now in 6th grade, is testing at a 12th grade reading level; his daughter scored 99% in reading and 95% in math in the nation on recent testing. These are Washington kids.

D. SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

D.1. Connecticut Coalition for Justice in Equitable Funding (CCJEF)

Dr. Kisiel reported that in 2005 a coalition of municipalities, Boards of Education, and other agencies filed a suit against the State of Connecticut for failure to adequately fund education. In 2010 the Connecticut Supreme Court ruled all students are entitled to a quality education and the state must pay for it. Recently the Board of Directors heard this update and Jim Finley is here to talk about the case. He is a pro bono consultant to the CCJEF.

Mr. Finley, a previous 5 year Manchester resident, is excited about this case. He expects it to come to trial in September. He reviewed the case and is hoping Manchester Board of Education will join the suit. Currently the state has underfunded education by \$800 million. Dues to join CCJEF are \$1,500 a year and being a member will enable Manchester to be part of the solution. Previously, Manchester was a member but stopped paying dues several years ago.

Mr. Leon wondered why we haven't been a member of CCJEF for the last three years. Mrs. Brooks stated that the board at that time had decided not to renew membership. Dr. Kisiel feels this is an important decision for the town. He believes it is important for Manchester to be part of the solution. Dr. Kisiel asked how many other Boards of Education are members. Mr. Finley stated 65 Boards of Education and 80 municipalities are in the group.

Mr. Thames wanted to know the timeline of the lawsuit. Mr. Finley stated there is a September trial date, though the state has been trying to delay that. Once the trial starts it is expected to last approximately three months with another six months for the judge to decide the case. So far it has taken 9 years to get to this point.

Mr. Pattacini heard that 21 districts are going to get subpoenas to provide information to the State and wondered if it has been disclosed which districts will be affected. Mr. Finley confirmed Manchester will be subpoenaed.

Mr. Pattacini feels this issue should be sent to committee for review to determine if the Board would like to join CCJEF. Dr. Kisiel noted the Board of Directors has not yet made a commitment and he feels it should be a joint venture. Mr. Finley noted that some towns joined together and others did not. He feels it is key for Boards of Education to become members. Mr. Pattacini sent the question to both Personnel & Finance and Curriculum & Instruction for further discussion.

D.2. Verplanck School Improvement Plan

Nicolas Jones, Principal of Verplanck, presented a Power Point on his School Improvement Plan and NWEA scores, which is available on the website.

Mr. Scappaticci, who reads with the students at Verplanck every Friday morning, stated he has noticed a positive climate at the school with an energized staff.

Ms. Pazda likes the positive reference of “scholars” when referring to the students. She equates it with believing in the students. She has seen a great improvement in climate and looks forward to the impact this may have on test scores in the future.

Mr. Thames, whose grandson attends Verplanck, notes his family is satisfied with the school and his grandson is happy there. He is looking forward to an academic turnaround and commends Mr. Jones’ efforts thus far.

Mr. Pattacini congratulated Mr. Jones on the improvement in reading scores. Regarding math, he wondered if the school has enough resources. Mr. Jones stated they are well equipped, including professional development for teachers.

Mr. Pattacini wondered about the reduction in suspensions from 67 last year to less than 20 so far this year. Mr. Jones stated the change in climate provides a focus on positive and not negative. For each negative office referral a teacher is required to provide 4 positive office referrals. Not everything is suspendable or even referable. Creative consequences have also been used.

Verplanck is hosting math night on April 3rd from 5:30-7:00 p.m. and invites the Board to attend.

D.3. Comparison of Fall and Winter NWEA Testing

Dr. Kisiel reviewed the Board had previously asked to be provided with the NWEA outcomes on a regular basis. Ms. Radikas presented a Power Point, available on the website, detailing the district scores from fall to winter.

Mr. Pattacini was encouraged that we are not just looking at scores in 9th and 10th grade, but how intervention in earlier years will impact scores in high school. Ms. Radikas noted that unit development is being reviewed currently and the goal is to prepare students for high school.

D.4. Recognition of Board Member Service

Dr. Kisiel announced that March is Board of Education month. He feels it is important to acknowledge the members of the board, who volunteer their time for the benefit of our children. Their actions are in the best interests of our children. In recognition of this service, a small token of appreciation was given to Board

members from the administration. Dr. Kisiel noted it is a pleasure to work with this Board.

E. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

E.1. Action on Policy Section 504

The policy had been presented to the Board at the last meeting. Mr. Scappaticci noted there had been no questions forwarded to him since the last meeting. There were no questions on the policy tonight.

Secretary Scappaticci moved for the Board to approve the Policy Committee's proposed revision to the Policy Section 504. Mr. Crockett seconded the motion.

8/0 – Voted in Favor.

F. NEW BUSINESS

None.

G. COMMUNICATIONS

G.1. Manchester High School Principal Search Update

Mr. Pattacini reviewed that the Board was unable to agree on a benefit with the final candidate for MHS Principal and the candidate withdrew from consideration. The search has been reopened, with the deadline for applications May 9th. The appointment of a principal is slated for June 30th.

Mr. Thames inquired about the application process for principal. Dr. Kisiel stated the position is advertised nationally and locally and applications are submitted online and reviewed with Mr. Geary.

G.2. Elementary School Facility Options

Mr. Pattacini reviewed the Board had met in workshop fashion on March 20th to review information and options regarding school facilities. Seven alternatives have been outlined, including cost, swing-space considerations, and impact. The options are available on the website (boe.manchesterct.gov) for review, along with supporting information. There has been a public forum scheduled for April 2nd at Bailey Auditorium at MHS at 7:00 p.m. The options will be presented and a preferred option will be discussed.

H. COMMITTEE REPORTS

H.1. Policy Committee

Mr. Scappaticci reviewed that the last meeting was held on March 10th. In attendance were himself, Ms. Hagenow, Ms. Pazda, Ms. Cruz and Dr. Kisiel. A brief discussion of changes to Policy 5125.1 was held and further revisions will be presented to the committee by Dr. Kisiel in April. The committee also continued discussion regarding public comment sessions during Board meetings. The committee will continue to discuss this in the context of revisions to the Board's agenda revisions.

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS (Limited to items on tonight's agenda)

Scott Aiken, 92 Laurel Street, will be unable to attend the April 2nd public forum. He hopes members of the Washington community will attend, but notes there are severe trust issues with the East and West side neighborhoods. Mr. Aiken likes to leave work early when it is nice out so he can walk to Washington and talk with the other parents. Mr. Aiken notes that the Board cannot grasp what a family the Washington community is, and they are going to break it up. They broke up the East side family and are going to do it again and he wants to stop them. Mr. Aiken sees growth in the school neighborhood but feels this is not the City of Village Charm if you are black or brown. He notes closing the achievement gap takes a community school and teachers, some of which have been at Washington 15+ years. He notes one teacher at Washington has her own children attend the school instead of Keeney, which is their neighborhood school. Mr. Aiken also heard that the principal was given the option to change schools and instead chose to stay at Washington, and recently organized a clothing swap there.

J. ITEMS FOR FUTURE AGENDAS

None.

K. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Pattacini called for a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Leon moved and Mr. Crockett seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting.

8/0 - Voted in favor.

Adjournment 8:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Scappaticci
Board Secretary